

# **Celebrate Agriculture**

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The first day of spring is a time to celebrate. We celebrate new growth, prosperity and all that Wyoming has to offer. Spring is the perfect time to recognize agriculture and its positive impact on Wyoming's heritage, economy and quality of life. "Celebrate Agriculture" is the theme for National Agriculture Week, March 18-24.

Agriculture is important to every state in the union, but nowhere is it more a part of the state's heritage than it is in Wyoming. Farmers and ranchers were active in this area before Wyoming became a state, and their important contributions continue today.

Wyoming agriculture has and still plays a vital role in providing and securing our open spaces and wildlife habitat. Nationally, Wyoming ranks eighth in the total acres of farms and ranches, with 34.4 million acres dedicated to farming and ranching. The state also ranks first nationally in the average size of farms and ranches. Without agriculture's presence, these 34.4 million acres would soon be lost to urban development.

In addition to conserving our natural resources, the men and women of Wyoming's 9,200 farms and ranches generate revenue of over \$850 million annually. Over 75 percent of Wyoming's cash receipts stem from the marketing of livestock and livestock products.

Not only do these agriculture producers bring money into the state, they also contribute to the economy by spending these dollars in their local communities. The efficiency of their operations allows consumers to spend less for food than people of any other country in the world.

While most Wyoming citizens recognize the importance of agriculture to the state, many do not take the time to recognize and celebrate our agriculture producers. Ag Week is the time to observe these contributions and thank the producers for everything they do.

Governor Dave Freudenthal recognized many of these important contributions when he declared March 21, 2007 as "Wyoming Agriculture Day." Now it is time for Wyoming citizens to celebrate the importance of agriculture and show their support for this vital industry. The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is giving away green and white wristbands for the public to wear during National Agriculture Week and throughout the year. These wristbands are available from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture or county extension offices around the state.

Please join me in wearing a wristband during National Agriculture Week, March 18-24, and celebrating agriculture and the contributions of the men and women in the agriculture industry. Agriculture truly is the heart of Wyoming's heritage and future!